

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Sector Update

OCTOBER 2015

SECTOR OVERVIEW

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) programs represent vital components of USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) responses to rapid-onset disasters and complex emergencies, as disaster-affected populations are more susceptible to illness and death from waterborne and communicable diseases. WASH interventions in emergencies often include promotion of good hygienic practices, construction or repair of latrines, removal of solid waste, and provision of safe, treated water. Activities such as building latrines and establishing waste removal systems can prove even more challenging in areas with high water tables, hard rock sites, and dense populations.

USAID/OFDA also links emergency WASH activities with transition and development programs funded by other USAID offices and incorporates institutional partners—such as local governments—in program planning and implementation to promote the sustainability of water- and hygiene-focused projects. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, USAID/OFDA provided \$213.4 million to support WASH programs in more than 35 countries.

WEST AFRICA EBOLA OUTBREAK RESPONSE



To help prevent EVD transmission, a boy uses a chlorinated hand-washing station outside his school in Liberia. (Photo by Melissa Obrysko/USAID)

During FY 2015, USAID/OFDA continued its response to the largest Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in history that has primarily affected Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone and resulted in nearly 11,300 deaths, according to the UN World Health Organization (WHO). Addressing the outbreak has required close coordination among international organizations and national governments, with USAID/OFDA leading U.S. Government (USG) EVD response activities in West Africa.

The USAID/OFDA WASH team collaborated with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), West African ministries of health and public works, and many other national and international organizations to address critical WASH needs and break the chain of EVD transmission. At EVD treatment facilities, USAID/OFDA supported multiple systems for water supply treatment, sanitation, and solid waste disposal to ensure patient care and essential infection prevention and control practices. In communities across affected countries, USAID/OFDA funded social mobilization teams to promote hand washing and other hygiene practices, while also supporting environmental health technicians to conduct safe and dignified burials to reduce the risk of EVD infections. With the number of EVD cases declining at the end of FY 2015, USAID/OFDA also evaluated how to better contain potential future outbreaks, including through support to research that improves disinfection procedures and increases understanding of the virus' survival in the environment.

PROVIDING EMERGENCY WASH SUPPORT FOLLOWING THE NEPAL EARTHQUAKE



USAID/OFDA WASH team assesses earthquake damage in Nepal's capital city, Kathmandu. (Photo by Lucien Lefcourt/USAID)

On April 25, 2015, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck Nepal, resulting in nearly 9,000 deaths, damaging or destroying more than 885,000 houses, and affecting approximately 8 million people. The earthquake damaged rural water systems throughout the country, limiting the availability of safe drinking water. Residents of damaged and destroyed homes were left without access to basic sanitation facilities, putting them at heightened risk of disease outbreaks during the coming monsoon season.

Immediately following the earthquake, USAID/OFDA partnered with multiple organizations to repair and rehabilitate damaged water systems in rural areas.

USAID/OFDA also provided funding for non-governmental organization (NGO) partners, including ACTED, Mercy Corps, and Save the Children, to support affected

households through integrated shelter and WASH interventions, providing temporary sanitation facilities and essential hygiene items that residents lost during the earthquake. In addition, USAID/OFDA supported the strategic stockpiling of point-of-use water treatment solutions, such as chlorine and hand-washing stations, in areas at increased risk of disease outbreak during the June-to-September and October-to-December monsoon seasons.

SUPPORTING WASH ASSISTANCE FOR CONFLICT-AFFECTED SYRIANS



Delivery of USAID/OFDA-supported water tanks to increase access to safe drinking water in Syria. (Courtesy of USAID Partner)

Prior to the onset of the civil war in Syria in March 2011, Syrians were accustomed to robust water and sanitation services across much of the country. As the conflict enters its fifth year, these systems have repeatedly sustained damage, and Syrians have had to adapt to increasingly limited access to basic services. With at least 7.6 million Syrians internally displaced, people are frequently forced to seek shelter in structures and areas that offer limited or no access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.

In response, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$53 million to support essential WASH services for Syrians during FY 2015. In particular, USAID/OFDA supported life-saving interventions through rehabilitating damaged water supply systems, establishing new water access points, monitoring water quality, and supporting water-trucking activities. With USAID/OFDA support, NGO partners also conducted hygiene promotion activities and upgraded waste water systems in collective shelters, health facilities, and communities to assist Syrians in meeting basic hygiene and sanitation needs.

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